

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for his indication of the allowance of claims 10-22, as well as the allowability of claims 8, 9 and 25-27 if rewritten into independent form to include the features of base and intervening claims.

In response to the indication in the above-noted Official Action of the allowance of claims 10-22 and of the allowability of claims 8, 9 and 25-27, and to the Statement of Reasons for Allowance attached thereto, Applicants wish to clarify the record with respect to the basis for the patentability of claims in the present application. In this regard, while Applicants do not disagree with the Examiner's indication that certain identified features are not disclosed by the references, Applicants submit that each of the above-noted claims recite a particular combination of features, and that the basis for patentability of each of these claims is based on the totality of the particular features recited therein.

Applicants would also like to thank the Examiner for acknowledging Applicants' claim of priority under 35 U.S.C. §119, as well as for acknowledging the information cited in Applicants' Information Disclosure Statement filed July 10, 2001.

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 23, 24 and 27 will have been amended. In addition, claims 2, 6, 25 and 26 will have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. In view of the herein-contained amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal

of each of the outstanding objections and rejections, as well as an indication of the allowability of all the claims now pending, in due course.

In the above-mentioned Official Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-3 and 5-7 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over GOTO et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,408,842) in view of ASHLEY (U.S. Patent No. 5,754,384). Claims 23 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over GOTO in view of ASHLEY, and further in view of TSUNUMI et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,437,538). Claim 4 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over GOTO et al., in view of ASHLEY, and further in view of NAGAI et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,982,153).

Additionally, the Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review was returned with an indication that the margins of FIG. 10 are not acceptable. Applicants have attached hereto a Formal copy of Figure 10 with corrected margins.

The Examiner indicated the allowability of claims 10-22. Additionally, the Examiner objected to claims 8, 9 and 25-27 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated they would be allowable if rewritten into independent form to include all the limitations of the base (and presumably any intervening) claim(s).

By the present response, Applicants have amended claim 1 to recite substantially all of the features recited in preexisting claim 25 (indicated as allowable). Claim 4 has been amended to recite substantially all of the features recited in preexisting claims 1, 2 and 26 (indicated as allowable). Claim 8 (indicated as allowable) has been amended to recite

P20492.A04

substantially all of the features recited in preexisting claims 1 and 2. Claim 27 (indicated as allowable) has been amended to recite substantially all of the features recited in preexisting claims 1, 2 and 4.

Claims 3 and 7 have been amended to depend from amended claim 8. Claims 5, 23 and 24 have been amended to depend from amended claim 4. Amended independent claims 1 and 27 have no claims depending therefrom.

Applicants respectfully submit that each of the claims now pending recites substantially all of a combination of features indicated as allowable by the Examiner. In this regard, Applicants note however that independent claims 1, 4, 8 and 27 have not been amended to merely include the various features recited in claims indicated as allowable by the Examiner. Rather, Applicants have reworded substantially all of the features of the allowable claims to more clearly recite the features of the claimed invention without narrowing the scope thereof. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request an indication of the allowability of each of claims 1, 4, 8 and 27.

Applicants additionally submit that each of claims 3, 5, 7, 9, 23 and 24 are allowable, at least for depending from an allowable independent claim, as well as for additional reasons related to their own recitations. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of each of the outstanding objections and rejections, as well as an indication of the allowability of each of claims 1, 3-5, 7-24 and 27.

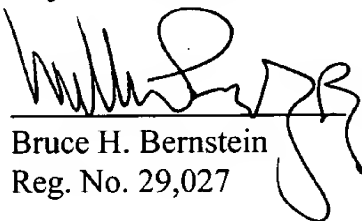
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so. Upon entry of the present amendment, each of the pending independent claims will recite substantially all of the features recited in objected-to claims previously indicated by the Examiner as reciting allowable subject matter.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,  
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